



**"Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, but just look what they can do when they stick together!"**  
**-Vesta M. Kelly**

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# Winfield American

Vol. 22, Issue 1,105

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December 1, 2023

## Franciscan's Fresh Start Markets celebrating one year of successes

Franciscan Health's Fresh Start Markets are celebrating a milestone this fall after serving nearly 3,900 food insecure residents with healthy options in their first year of operation.

The Fresh Start Markets at the St. Clare Clinic in Crown Point at 1121 Indiana Ave. and in Hammond at 5530 Hohman Ave. are part of the healthcare ministry's efforts to fight food insecurity in the Region. The healthy food pantries allow those in need to shop free of charge.

"The markets are focused on people with acute and chronic diseases, not just filling gaps in food security," Franciscan Health Community Health Improvement Coordinator Wendie Clark said. "People

are often faced with what is fast and easy when it comes to food choices and those tend to be foods that are filled with sodium and preservatives, which are not the best choices for health."

The Fresh Start Markets were developed as part of a food insecurity initiative between the Franciscan Health Foundation and the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana. According to the Food Bank, roughly one in six Northwest Indiana residents is food insecure.

Phase I of the project was the Mobile Markets, which provide food to those in need with monthly drive-through events at various Franciscan Health locations throughout the year. Franciscan Health employees volunteer their time to staff the events.



Franciscan Health Community Health Improvement Coordinator Wendie Clark stocks the shelves at the Fresh Start Market Crown Point earlier this month.

The Fresh Start Markets were Phase II and Phase III was the Food Rx Program, which allows low-income individuals and their families to receive additional, specific foods to meet their individual health needs.

While the Fresh Start Markets are centered on providing healthy food options, the staff also works to get to the root of the underlying causes of food insecurity.

"You can't just feed them because it's not the only



Pictured from left-to-right: Franciscan Health Foundation Executive Director Rick Peltier and Friends of the St. Clare Clinic's Tom Kuhn and Jim Larsen hear from Franciscan Health Community Health Improvement Coordinator Wendie Clark about the many benefits of the St. Clare Clinic Fresh Start Market in Crown Point.

deficit they have in their body, mind and spirit." Clark said. "We're safe, friendly atmosphere. Franciscan, so we feed them "We want people to feel welcome and reduce

One of the ways the staff does that is by providing a safe, friendly atmosphere. "We want people to feel welcome and reduce (See *Franciscan* Pg. 7)

## St. Mary's schoolteacher named D.A.R.E. Teacher of the Year

St. Mary Catholic Community School's 5th grade teacher, Mrs. Heather Williams, was recently selected as D.A.R.E. Teacher of the Year. She was the lone recipient of this award given to only one teacher in the entire state of Indiana.

Williams was recognized in Indianapolis at the governor's mansion. She was nominated by Crown Point's D.A.R.E. officer, Stanko Gligic. Officer Gligic was also recognized for his outstanding work with the D.A.R.E. program.

"The award is wonderful and completely unexpected," said Williams. "It felt great to represent St.

Mary's." Principal, Tom Ruiz added, "We are grateful for Mrs. Williams and Officer G's dedication to the effort to help children make good choices as they navigate the challenges of adolescence."

D.A.R.E. is an acronym for Drug Abuse Resistance Education. St. Mary School in Crown Point offers grade levels Junior Pre-Kindergarten (for three-year-olds) through grade eight. St. Mary's outstanding and creative faculty teaches a rich curriculum supported by leading-edge technology. To learn more about St. Mary's School or request a tour, visit [www.school.stmarycp.org](http://www.school.stmarycp.org).



Teacher Heather Williams, flanked by D.A.R.E. Officer Stanko Gligic (left) and Crown Point Police Chief Ryan Patrick (right) at the governor's mansion in Indianapolis.



Fifth grade teacher Heather Williams' class erupted in applause upon learning that she was named the D.A.R.E. Teacher of the Year for the State of Indiana.



### Stephano's Pizza owner 'Jess the Sauce Boss' celebrates ten years of ownership

Jessica Wielosinski took over Stephano's Pizza ten years ago. "It's a very exciting time to be celebrating a decade of ownership. I am truly thankful for the continued support of this community throughout the years," she said. "My customers aren't just transactions to me; they've become friends, neighbors, and the reason why this pizzeria is more than just a business. I'm looking forward to my next chapter and this wonderful community along my side." Be sure to look inside the Winfield American for the coupon Jess runs each week; grab one of her delicious pies and please thank her for her dedication to deliciousness.



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**Across the street from Lakes of the Four Seasons**

### Grants available for urban forestry projects

Grants totaling \$1.8 million are now available to fund urban forestry throughout Indiana. Administered by the Indiana DNR Division of Forestry, Community & Urban Forestry, the funding is available through the USDA Forest Service Urban & Community Forestry program.

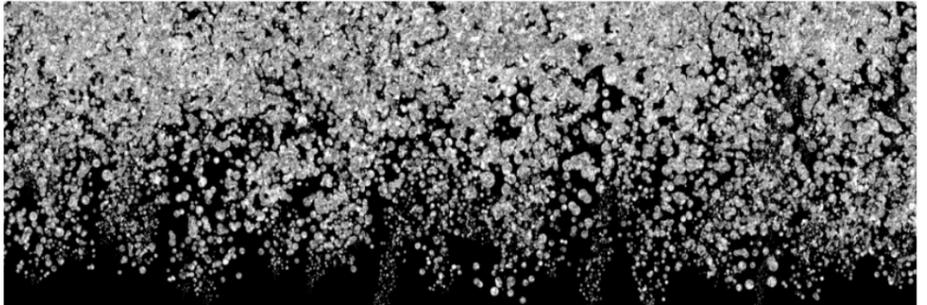
Projects that are fundable through this grant include tree planting, tree inventories with management plans,

urban tree canopy assessments, storm response planning, public and/or staff education, program outreach, and the establishment and strengthening of local urban forestry programs. Funds are awarded on a reimbursable basis, and no match is required.

Communities interested in applying should note that grant awards are available for a minimum \$50,000 and a maximum \$250,000, and

only areas that have census tracts that have been determined to be underserved or disadvantaged according to the Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool are eligible.

Applications are due by December 22. All application materials are available for download at [www.dnr.IN.gov/forestry/programs/community-and-urban-forestry/ira-grants](http://www.dnr.IN.gov/forestry/programs/community-and-urban-forestry/ira-grants)



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# Indiana's Hunt for Hunger will feed hungry Hoosiers DNR seeking nominations for Trails Advisory Board

Indiana First Lady Janet Holcomb recently joined the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) at Gleaners Food Bank of Indiana to let hunters know how they can help hungry Hoosiers. This reminder comes as deer fire-arms hunting season begins and the need for protein donations remains strong across the state.

Updated this year with a new name and website, Indiana Hunt for Hunger turns donated deer into healthy venison that is provided to Hoosiers through food banks like Gleaners across the state.

"Indiana Hunt for Hunger combines two time-honored Hoosier traditions—deer hunting and helping our neighbors in need," said Holcomb. "As you're out hunting across Indiana this season, if you're lucky enough to harvest a deer, or possibly even two, please consider donating it to be turned into healthy venison for Hoosiers experiencing hunger."

The program, previously called the Sportsmen's Benevolence Fund, was started by the Indiana DNR and its partners in 2008. Since then, it has grown across the state to collect thousands of deer donations, providing hundreds of thousands of meals for Hoosiers.

"Too many Hoosiers are struggling to put food on the table. Our member food banks around the state are serving record numbers of families," said Emily Weikert Bryant, executive director of Feeding Indiana's Hungry. "Items like protein can be unaffordable on a tight household budget, creating a high demand for it at our food banks. By hunters taking an extra deer and donating it through Hunt for Hunger, Hoosier food banks and pantries will have more healthy protein to share with our friends and neighbors this deer season."

To better explain the program's vital mission and spur

even greater participation, it's now called Indiana Hunt for Hunger, with continuing partnerships with Hoosiers Feeding the Hungry, the Dubois County Sportsmen's Club, and Farmers & Hunters Feeding the Hungry.

"Donations can make a huge difference because the meat from one deer can provide 200 meals for a family," said Dan Bortner, DNR director. "One Hoosier hunter can make an incredible difference."

Here's how it works. Hunters take their field-dressed harvested deer to one of more than 50 participating meat processing sites across the state. The processor takes it from there, processing the meat into healthy venison burgers and donating it to area food banks. Indiana Hunt for Hunger pays the processing fees, so there is no extra cost to the hunter.

"Hoosiers Feeding the Hungry sincerely appreciates the past financial support pro-

vided by the Indiana DNR's Sportsmen's Benevolence Fund," said Suzie Jordan, executive director of Hoosiers Feeding the Hungry. "This support has allowed our agency to pay for the deer harvested as part of our program to be processed and provided to food banks and pantries throughout the state. Over 500,000 pounds of venison has been shared through this partnership. As the name changes to Hunt for Hunger, we can increase the awareness of the partnership between our nonprofit agency and the Indiana DNR to strengthen and expand the knowledge of our mission to Hoosier hunters, our processors, and food banks throughout the state."

A list of participating vendors is posted at [www.on.IN.gov/huntforhunger](http://www.on.IN.gov/huntforhunger). Processors interested in joining the list can contact Capt. Jet Quillen at [jquillen@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:jquillen@dnr.IN.gov) or 317-232-0658 for more information.

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources seeks nominations from passionate outdoor recreation enthusiasts to serve on the Indiana Trails Advisory Board. Representatives are needed from the following trail groups: bicyclists, health, off-road motorcyclists, parks and recreation agencies, and water trail users.

Nominees should be involved with a regional or statewide organization, club, or association related to the group they would represent. Selected board members would serve a three-year term starting March 2024 and attend quarterly meetings in varying locations around the state. TAB meetings are in-person and occur on the first

Thursday of March, June, September, and December at 3 p.m. local time.

The 15-member voluntary TAB is an essential part of the state's trails system, acting as an advisory board to the DNR and providing recommendations on trail issues throughout the state. Members are also encouraged to report on any news from their groups to the board as well as share pertinent trail information with their constituents. Nominations will be accepted by the DNR Division of State Parks from December 1-30. To learn more about the Indiana Trails Advisory Board and nomination information visit [www.in.gov/dnr/state-parks/recreation/trails/indiana-trails-advisory-board](http://www.in.gov/dnr/state-parks/recreation/trails/indiana-trails-advisory-board)



## This week in history

December 1, 1958

A fire at a grade school in Chicago killed 90 students. The Our Lady of Angels School was operated by the Sisters of Charity in Chicago. In 1958, there were well over 1,200 students enrolled at the school, which occupied a large, old building. Unfortunately, little in the way of fire prevention was done before December 1958. The building did not have any sprinklers and no regular preparatory drills were conducted. When a small fire broke out in a pile of trash in the basement, it led to disaster.

The fire probably began about 2:30 p.m. Teachers led their classes outside, but did not sound a general alarm. The school's janitor discovered the fire at 2:42 and shouted for the alarm to be rung. However, he was either not heard or the alarm system did not operate properly, and the students in classrooms on the second floor were completely unaware of the rapidly spreading flames beneath them.

It took only a few more minutes for the fire to reach the second floor. Some students jumped out windows to escape. Firefighters also tried to get ladders up to the windows. One quick-thinking nun had her students crawl under the smoke and roll down the stairs, where they were rescued. Other classes remained in their rooms, praying for help.

[www.history.com](http://www.history.com)

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## New Outdoor Indiana features 2024 calendar, 'Hunt for Hunger' Grants available for urban forestry projects

Do you or someone you know love looking at photos of Indiana's outdoors and learning more about the many recreational opportunities it offers?

An attractive and money-saving holiday gift solution is ordering a subscription to Outdoor Indiana magazine before December 10. Your subscription will include the 2024 calendar, which is enclosed in the November/December 2023 issue.

The calendar can also be purchased separately for \$10, features photos from all over the state. Calendar photo highlights for 2024 include scenes from Shades, Lincoln, Fort Harrison, Whitewater Memorial, Pokagon, and Potato Creek state parks, as well as shots from Fern Cliff and Charles Springs nature

preserves, plus Goose Pond and Hovey Lake Fish & Wildlife areas, the Hoosier National Forest, and Daviess County.

The issue also features an article by Indiana First Lady Janet Holcomb promoting the Indiana Hunt for Hunger program, which pays for deer donated by hunters to be processed into healthy venison for hungry Hoosiers.

Outdoor Indiana is available now at Indiana State Park Inns across the state for \$4. Subscriptions are \$15 for one year (six issues, a 27% savings over cover price) and \$28 for two years (12 issues, a 42% savings).

Subscribe at [www.ShopINStateParks.com](http://www.ShopINStateParks.com) or by calling 317-233-3046. To read article excerpts, go to [www.OutdoorIndiana.org](http://www.OutdoorIndiana.org).

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### DIRECTOR PROFILE: LARRY GEISEN



5th-generation Owner and Funeral Director for 22 years

Attended St. Mary's School and graduated from Crown Point High School in 1984

Graduate of the Purdue University School of Management in 1988

Member of the Crown Point Rotary Club and Board Member of the Crown Point Community Foundation

Enjoys coaching baseball and basketball, playing golf and spending time with wife Kim, children Alle, Anthony and Nicholas



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Christmas is coming and we are...



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...decorating, baking, and hiding gifts!



Kids: color stuff in!



Dear Santa, I've been very good this year...

Christmas is coming and I've hung up my stocking. Now I'm writing my letter to Santa Claus! Have you?

**Can you find and circle items below that might fit into a stocking?**

L L O D K E T J B I O Y  
 A N S E F N T O P K N E R  
 B H N E T T E D V D C M J  
 V N C O I J U G B N T E S  
 H G O A N C E G N A R O K  
 B N U I K N K O U T R E S A  
 G F R N L J D E K O O B T E  
 O I H S J G B Y I Y R A Z I J  
 F G I T M A G I C T R I C K S I H G  
 N H T F D A P O I J K N C A J H  
 M U Y G F B N G R D A R S P I P  
 S G S A Q U H E P Y A P I T F  
 T U C S P D G B N Y R U V X A  
 M Y T J I N U O K H Z O U  
 G H U N C N N K J U Z Q C  
 J N K Q S O C K S L T A  
 E F R G T A I O E Q N  
 K L P Y T R D M T  
 N P E

book  
coins  
doll  
crayons  
puzzle  
DVD

nuts  
candy cane  
orange  
magic tricks  
gum  
socks

## Christmas is Coming!

Every year, while waiting for Christmas, people around the world place glowing candles in their windows. Lights are hung on houses and trees. Cheerful fires are lighted in fireplaces. Bonfires and Yule logs blaze. Candlelight services are held in churches.

Burning candles and colored lights show our joy and hope. Candles in windows show a welcoming home and hearth. Lights remind some people of stars in the sky. All kinds of light can send a message of warmth and peace to all.



Lighting the Way!

Follow the dots to see what Pinch put in his windows.

## Holiday Hustle and Bustle

Wow! There's so much to do at holiday time.

Read the clues to fill in the puzzle and see what families are doing:

- \_\_\_\_\_ and tasting Christmas cookies
- \_\_\_\_\_ for the perfect gift until your feet hurt
- \_\_\_\_\_ in long lines to take photos with Santa
- \_\_\_\_\_ and hanging wreaths and garlands
- \_\_\_\_\_ through the woods to find and cut down the perfect Christmas tree
- \_\_\_\_\_ ornaments and stockings
- \_\_\_\_\_ and hiding gifts
- \_\_\_\_\_ up outdoor lights and putting Santa and Reindeer in the yard
- \_\_\_\_\_ a giant ham and baking it
- \_\_\_\_\_ plane tickets and packing suitcases
- \_\_\_\_\_ greetings and sending Christmas Cards
- \_\_\_\_\_ carols and sipping hot chocolate

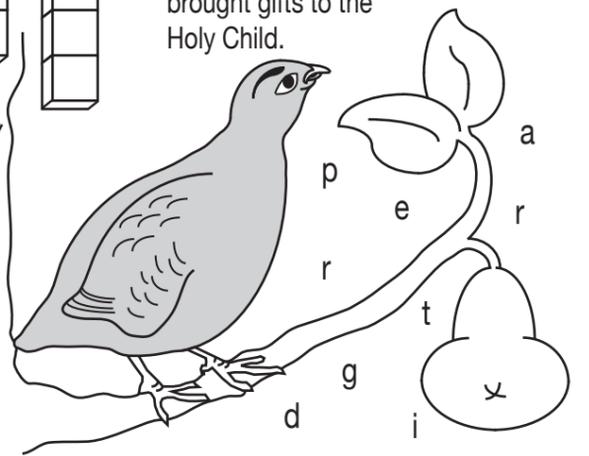
writing    tromping    wrapping    singing    standing    hanging    buying

making    baking    stringing    glazing    shopping

On the first day of Christmas,  
my true love gave to me...

... a \_\_\_\_\_ in a pear tree!

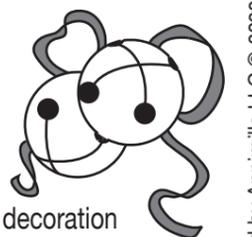
Most people start shopping and wrapping gifts after the Thanksgiving holiday and continue until Christmas Eve. The well-known song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" tells about gifts given and received from December 25th until January 5th. The next day is January 6th, the day Christians believe the Three Kings brought gifts to the Holy Child.



## Symbols of Christmas

There are symbols of Christmas all around us, but what do they mean or stand for? Use the letters in the word "Christmas" to fill in the blanks in the words below:

- \_\_andle\_\_ = light, joy, peace
- c\_\_rol\_\_ = music, cheer, friendliness
- S\_\_nta Cl\_\_us = gifts, generosity, magic
- sto\_\_k\_\_ngs = tradition, wonder, surprises
- b\_\_ll\_\_ = church, Santa's sleigh, merriment
- w\_\_ea\_\_hs = neverending circle of life, growth,
- mis\_\_l\_\_to\_\_ = love, fun, decoration
- re\_\_nd\_\_er = Christmas eve, Santa, sleigh
- \_\_in\_\_el = excitement, shining, Christmas tree
- ang\_\_l\_\_ = joy, messages, peace
- \_\_ard\_\_ = friends, greetings, photos
- t\_\_ee\_\_ = evergreen, end of winter, pine scent



~ Letter to the Editor ~

**W-O-W: New local organization aims to help homeless, feral cat and kitten population in the Winfield area**

Frustration with the feral cat population is a reality for many people here in Winfield. The feral cat population has grown exponentially, through no fault of their own. Some cats are born into it (ferals) and others are dumped and abandoned; or they are family pets that have gotten lost (strays). No matter which category, feral or stray, these cats are left to survive on their own. Many do not survive without human intervention. Kind-hearted humans will provide outdoor shelters along with food and water, which can ensure the safety of a feral colony. This is where frustration comes in. Again, through no fault

of their own, many of these cats become a big problem. They run in neighborhoods digging and destroying people's mulch and gardens. Many kill the birds at our birdfeeders; they dump trash cans looking for food. Here though is the biggest problem: Many of these cats are not spayed or neutered. A female cat, that is not spayed, can produce up to 150 kittens in their breeding lifetime. Then the kittens have kittens, and so on it goes.

A dedicated group of concerned "cat lovers" have come together to try and address the problems of feral cat colonies. We have formed an organization we call WOW, Whiskers of Winfield. We want to help reduce the number of feral/stray cats. We realize that the cats need help, and the humans need help.

The volunteers of WOW are dedicated to the health, safety, and care of the feral feline population here in Winfield/LOFS. Our goal is to reduce the feral population by 50% over the next 5 years. This can be achieved in a big way through TNR (Trap, Neuter, Return). The practice of TNR has been on the rise for several decades now in the United States. Initiated in 1992, it has proven to be an effective process for decreasing the population of feral cats. The TNR process involves live trapping the cats, taking them to a participating animal hospital to be neutered or spayed, giving them a rabies shot and tipping an ear to show that they have been neutered or spayed. They are then taken and released back into the environment they were trapped in. This process not only reduces the number

of kittens born into a colony, but also reduces trauma and illnesses that can occur in feral colonies and provides rescue opportunities for those kittens born into the colonies and future placements into "forever" homes.

Kittens that are trapped can be tamed over time. Spending time with them, interacting frequently and consistently and providing them with food, shelter and lots of affection can have them purring in your arms in no time. Here in WOW, we have volunteers that are fostering such kittens and they will be healthy, happy kittens ready for future home placement.

WOW is currently working with the Four Seasons Animal Hospital, and they have graciously agreed to help provide vaccines, medical care, and spay and neuter services at a reduced cost. As

we reduce the feral population, along with healthy kitten home placement, we potentially ease the frustration of the community.

WOW could use your help.

1. Let us know if you see cats and kittens that have been hanging around your yard. Don't worry about it being your neighbor's pet. When the cats are first trapped and taken in, the first thing the veterinarian does is check to see if it is micro-chipped. If so, the cat is then released back.

2. Provide our trappers with permission to enter your private property to set live traps.

3. Think about helping us build a foster base.

We are currently working toward establishing a 501c(3) so that any monetary contribution to our organization

will be tax deductible. This will help us in being able to raise funds to cover vet bills and give donations to those people who foster cats and kittens for placement into loving homes.

By providing TNR opportunities and sanctuary for homeless cats during their transition to a forever home, we can accomplish a viable decrease in the feral cat population. We can accomplish this together.

Please help. For more information, or for any questions you may have, please contact Sherry Gasparovic at 219-286-5532 or Linda Kroner at 219-765-3990.

Thank you from WOW! We care because cats are roaming everywhere!

Thank you sincerely. Sherry, Linda, and the rest of the cat lovers at WOW.

(Franciscan from Pg. 1)

the trauma of coming for help," Franciscan Health Community Health Specialist Selena Tinoco said. "It can be a shameful experience and we do all we can to lessen that feeling. We welcome them, let them take their time and most importantly, we listen so we can see what else we can help them with, either through our other services with Franciscan or by making connections to get them the help they need."

Food insecurity can be particularly stressful around the holidays when there is added financial pressure to purchase gifts. Clients at the St. Clare Clinic Fresh Start Market in Crown Point are receiving extra help for holiday meals with a donation of 75 \$120 Strack & Van Til grocery gift cards

and two \$160 gift cards purchased by a group of roughly 20 largely anonymous donors who call themselves the Friends of the St. Clare Clinic.

The organization raised more than \$9,000 to help feed neighbors this holiday season, about \$3,000 more than their 2022 donation.

"This philanthropic project allows our food insecure neighbors to enjoy a traditional holiday meal and to make the same kinds of memories around the table with their families that many of us take for granted," Franciscan Health Foundation Executive Director Rick Peltier said. "We thank the Friends of the St. Clare Clinic for their generous and longstanding support."

More information on how

to contribute to support the Fresh Start Market by supporting the Food Insecurity Fund is available at [www.FranciscanHealthFoundation.org](http://www.FranciscanHealthFoundation.org) or by calling the Franciscan Health Foundation at 219-661-3401.

For more information about the Fresh Start Markets and other food insecurity programs, contact the Franciscan



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**Fire Force Volunteers**

Lakes of the Four Seasons Volunteer Fire Force, which serves LOFS, Winfield, Winfield Township, and the WPTFP district, is always in need of more dedicated volunteers to join our ranks. Want to help your community by giving back through service? Call 219-662-7576 or e-mail to [chief@lofsfire.com](mailto:chief@lofsfire.com).

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# Northwest Indiana Symphony Orchestra presents 'Holiday Pops'

Celebrate the Holidays Symphony style as the Northwest Indiana Symphony and conductor Kirk Muspratt present their annual "Holiday Pops," with three performances, Thursday, December 7; and Friday, December 8 at 7:30 p.m. at the Auditorium at Living Hope Church and Saturday, December 9 at 7:30 p.m. at Valparaiso High School. The concert will also feature the Northwest Indiana Symphony Chorus, vocalist Jonathan Brown, and the Just for Fun Ukulele Strummers.



"The annual Holiday Pops has become a favorite way for families in Northwest Indiana to celebrate the festive season," said Maestro Muspratt. "With a mix of classic and contemporary holiday music, and the amazing carol sing-along, you're sure to get that warm holiday feeling." Share this seasonal tradition with your family!

The concert will feature traditional Holiday tunes like Jingle Bells and Santa Claus is Coming to Town, spiritual pieces like Amazing Grace and The Prayer, as well as the well-known carol sing-along.

Vocalist Jonathan Brown is a Gary native and currently serves as an Associate Pastor at Family Christian Center and in various leadership roles at their Chicago cam-

pus, City Church.

Highland's Just for Fun Ukulele Strummers are the largest in-person ukulele club in northwest Indiana and play a variety of tunes from Hawaiian, country and the Beatles.

Tickets for the concert range from \$40 -\$75 each and students are \$10. Group sales are available at a discount. Call the Symphony office at 219-836-0525 or visit the website at [www.NISOchestra.org](http://www.NISOchestra.org) to order tickets for Holiday Pops.

This concert is sponsored by Purdue University Northwest Department of Communication & Creative Arts and College of Humanities, Education, and Social Sciences, John Cicco's Menswear, Vidimos, Inc., BMO, Andy & Sue

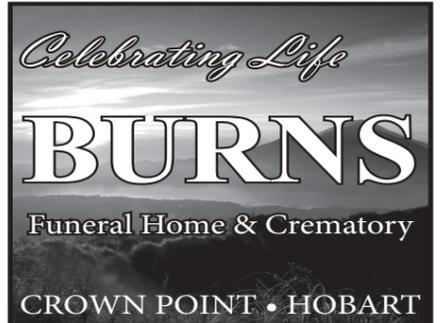
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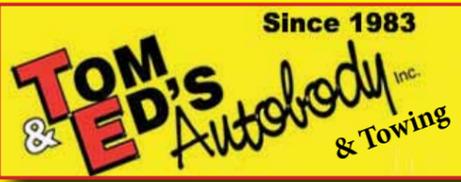
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## Winfield Township Trustee Cody Reynolds named to prestigious '20 Under 40' list

Winfield Township's Trustee, Cody Reynolds, who has served in that position since January 1 of this year, has been named to the '20 Under 40' list, which provides a guideline for the future movers-and-shakers of Northwest Indiana.

Linda Eisenhauer, President of the Winfield Board, nominated Reynolds for this award. At 32, Cody Reynolds has a resume that includes tours of duty at the Indiana Statehouse, U.S. Congress, the U.S. Department of Education and even the White House.

He has currently been focused on modernizing township government in order to provide more efficient and accessible services to residents.

"Coming to this role as a trustee, it's been really rewarding," Reynolds said. "The trustee's office does so many things most people don't realize, whether it's operating a food pantry or helping with utility assistance. It's incredibly reward-



ing to help people and give them a hand up."

In 2018, Reynolds also played an integral role in planning and executing the White House's Federal Commission on School Safety. As the director of intergovernmental affairs, Reynolds was responsible for planning and managing all of the externally facing events associated with the commission.

He recently assisted a historically black community college in Alabama with drafting a federal grant proposal for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration Connecting Minority Communities Pilot program,



which is designed to combat the digital equity gap in underserved communities. His client was awarded \$2.4 million, making it the largest single grant award in the institution's history.

"Education really does drive our economy, and that's where I'd love to spend the bulk of my time," he said.

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